DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 136 UD 032 855

TITLE	Ethnic Minorities in Britain. CRE Factsheet. Revised.
INSTITUTION	Commission for Racial Equality, London (England).
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	6p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Census Figures; *Educational Attainment; *Ethnic Groups; Family Characteristics; Foreign Countries; *Language Minorities; *Minority Groups; *Socioeconomic Status; Urban Areas
IDENTIFIERS	Fact Sheets; *Great Britain

ABSTRACT

This factsheet provides information about the status of ethnic minorities in Great Britain. At the 1991 census, just over 3 million (5.5%) of the people in Britain did not classify themselves as White. About half were of South Asian descent (Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi) and 30% were Black. Nearly 7.3% of the British population had been born elsewhere in the world, including Ireland. Nearly half of the nonWhite population had been born in the United Kingdom, and about three-quarters of them were British citizens. The ethnic groups speak many languages and represent a number of religions. Most have become urban residents, with 97% of Britain's nonWhite population living in England, mostly in large urban centers. London alone contains nearly half of England's nonWhite population. Nearly one-third of the nonWhite population is under 15 years of age. The largest households are those of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, and adults of Caribbean origin are most likely to live on their own. Only nine (1.4%) of the 652 members of Parliament in the House of Commons are from nonWhite ethnic groups, and only 3% of the 21,498 councilors in England and Wales are from nonWhite ethnic groups. (Contains 13 references, 5 tables and 2 figures.) (SLD)

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Ethnic Minorities in Britain

Commission For Racial Equality

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ETHNIC MINORITIES IN BRITAIN

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ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Britain has always had ethnic minorities. People with diverse histories, cultures, beliefs and languages have settled here since the beginning of recorded time. Some, like the Huguenots (Protestant refugees who arrived in the seventeenth century), gradually became assimilated. Others, such as the Irish and Jews, who came at various periods, have to some extent maintained separate group identities. People from South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean arrived in substantial numbers after the Second World War to help meet severe labour shortages. The most recent arrivals in Britain include refugees and asylum seekers from Vietnam, Somalia, Turkey, the Middle East and former Yugoslavia.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the population of Great Britain, 1991

	Number	% of total population	% born in UK
Total pop	54,888,844	100.0	93
White	51,873,794	94.5	96
Ethnic minorities	3,015,050	5.5	48
Black Caribbean	499,964	0.9	53
Black African	212,362	0.4	35
Black Other	178,401	0.3	60
Indian	840,255	1.5	42
Pakistani	476,555	0.9	50
Bangladeshi	162,835	0.3	37
Chinese	156,938	0.3	28
Other Asian	197,534	0.4	22
Other Other	290,206	0.5	40

Source: Owen, D. 1992/1995

POPULATION

▶ At the 1991 census, just over 3 million (5.5%) of the 55 million people in Britain did not classify themselves as white. As Table 1 shows, half of them are South Asian (that is, of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent), and 30% are black.

▶ Nearly four million people (7.3% of the total population) resident in Great Britain at the 1991 census had been born elsewhere in the world (including Ireland, north and south). The majority of them (61%) were white.

▶ Table 2 demonstrates the rich diversity of Britain's minority populations. However, the figures do not show the true size of the communities, as they exclude British-born members of these groups. For example, Indians born in India represent only 37% of the Indian group: 41% were born in the UK, 17% in the East African Commonwealth countries and 5% elsewhere. Moreover the figures *include* people born overseas to white British parents.

▶ In 1991, nearly half of Britain's non-white population had been born in the UK, and about three-quarters of them were British citizens. The overwhelming majority of non-white children under 16 were born in the UK.

▶ People of European origin account for the majority of the rest of those people born outside Britain. People from Ireland (north and south) make up the largest group of these – 1.5% of the population, or 4.5% if their children are included. People born in Germany are the largest group from other countries in the European Community, while Poles, who settled in Britain after the war, make up the majority of people from eastern Europe.

▶ British Jews number about 285,000. There are around 63,000 Gypsies in England, 53,000 of whom are Romanies.

LANGUAGE

▶ Punjabi is the most commonly spoken South Asian language among British Asians (52% overall, which includes 95% of all Sikhs and 74% of Pakistanis). Urdu follows (31% overall, including 73% of all Pakistanis), and then Hindi (27% overall, including 70% of all Gujaratis) and Gujarati (25%, including 67% of

NOTE: The ethnic group question in the 1991 census does not yield complete data on Britain's very diverse ethnic minority groups, both white and non-white. The term 'ethnic minority' is generally used to refer to those who did not tick the 'White' category. This factsheet distinguishes between white and non-white ethnic minorities. The ethnic categories used are those used in the study or survey quoted.

African Asians). Cantonese is the most commonly spoken language among ethnic Chinese people (66%), while 22% of Caribbeans speak Patois. With the exception of Bangladeshis, who use Bengali and Sylheti, the proportions writing in all these languages are significantly lower.

▶ A survey of school pupils in Greater London shows that at least a quarter of them speak a language other than English at home. Bengali, spoken by 5% of pupils, is the most common first language other than English, followed by Punjabi (3%) and Turkish and Urdu (at 2% each). Altogether, 275 languages are spoken by pupils in London's schools.

▶ Almost all 16–24 year-olds from ethnic minority groups speak English fluently or fairly well – the lowest proficiency rates in this age group are found among Pakistani (84%) and Bangladeshi women (80%). Among women aged 45 to 64, those of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese origin are least likely to be proficient in English – only 4% of Bangladeshi women, 28% of Pakistani women and 47% of Chinese women are proficient.

In 1991, 'non-white' ethnic minorities made up 20% of London's population. If all white people born outside the UK are counted, London's ethnic minority population is 30%

RELIGION

▶ The 1991 census did not include a question about religion, so precise information about the size of Britain's faith communities is not available. The estimates given below are based on extrapolations from census data on ethnic background, other sample studies, and information supplied by organisations within the religious communities themselves. Therefore, these estimates are not strictly accurate:

Baha'i: 6,000
Buddhist: 130,000
Christian: 40 million
Hindu: 400 – 555,000
Jain: 25 – 30,000
Jewish: 300,000
Muslim: 1 – 1.5 million
Sikh: 350 – 500,000
Zoroastrian: 5 – 10,000.

▶ The fourth national survey of ethnic minorities by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) found that Chinese (11%) and white people (13%) were least likely to say that 'religion was very important to the way they lived their life'. Pakistanis (73%) and Bangladeshis (76%) were most likely to agree with the statement. Figure 1 shows how age affected each group's responses to this statement.

▶ 40% of Jews are members of Orthodox synagogues and 13% are members of Reform synagogues; 37% do not belong to any synagogue.

Table 2. People born outside Great Britain and resident here, by countries of birth, 1991

Countries of birth	No. resident in Britain	% of Britain's population
Northern Ireland	245,000	0.45
Irish Republic	592,000	1.08
Germany*	216,000	0.39
Italy	91,000	0.17
France	53,000	0.10
Other EC	133,900	0.24
Scandinavia and EFTA	58,300	0.11
E Europe &former USSR	142,900	0.26
Cyprus	78,000	0.14
Rest of Near and Middle East	58,300	0.11
Old Commonwealth (Aust, NZ, Canada)	177,400	0.32
New Commonwealth	1,648,400	3.08
Jamaica	142,000	0.26
Rest of Caribbean	122,600	0.22
India	409,000	0.75
Pakistan	234,000	0.43
Bangladesh	105,000	0.19
Rest of South Asia	39,500	0.07
South East Asia (inc Hong Kong)	150,400	0.27
East Africa	220,600	0.40
West and Southern Africa	110,700	0.20
Rest of the World	566,200	1.03
Asia	231,000	0.42
North Africa	44,600	0.08
South Africa	68,300	0.12
Rest of Africa	34,300	0.06
USA	143,000	0.26
Rest of America (inc Canada)	42,000	0.08
Total born outside GB	**3,991,000**	**7.27**

* Includes children of British army personnel who were born in Germany.

Source: Owen, D, 1992-1995

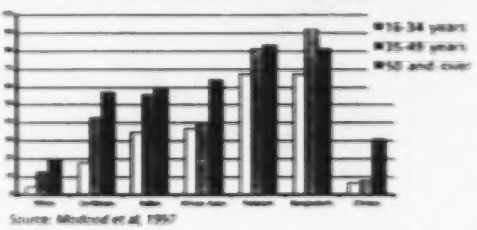
REGIONS OF RESIDENCE

▶ 97% of Britain's non-white population live in England, mostly in large urban centres.

▶ As Table 3 shows, Greater London contains nearly half (45%) of Britain's non-white population compared with only 10% of the white population.

▶ White ethnic minorities, too, are concentrated in the south east, especially in London. For example, 88% of the Turkish-born population are settled in the south east, with 77% in London. People born in Ireland, north and south, and their children make up 11.5% of

Figure 1. 'Religion is very important to the way I live my life', by ethnic group and age



Source: Modood et al, 1997

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Table 3. Regions of residence

	White		Ethnic minorities	
	No.	% of GB	No.	% of GB
South east	15,513,800	29.9	1,694,700	56.4
Greater London	5,332,900	10.3	1,346,800	44.8
East Anglia	1,983,700	3.8	43,300	1.4
South west	4,546,900	8.8	62,700	2.1
West Midlands	4,727,200	9.1	422,900	14.1
West Midlands MC	2,179,200	4.2	372,500	12.4
East Midlands	3,764,500	7.3	188,800	6.3
Yorks & Humberside	4,621,200	8.9	215,200	7.2
North West	6,500,400	11.6	243,200	8.1
Greater Manchester	2,351,900	4.5	147,500	4.9
Merseyside	1,378,300	2.7	25,300	0.8
North	2,989,000	5.8	37,800	1.3
Tyne & Wear	1,075,500	2.1	19,700	0.7
Wales	2,773,900	5.4	41,200	1.4
Scotland	4,934,500	9.5	64,000	2.1
Total	51,843,900	100.0	3,006,500	100.0

Source: Owers, D. 1992-1995

London's population. The London Research Centre estimates that, if all white people born outside the UK were counted as ethnic minorities, London's ethnic minority population in 1991 would have been 30%.

▶ Two per cent of Britain's non-white population (62,600) live in Scotland, mainly in Strathclyde, Lothian, Grampian and Tayside, and 1.4% (41,600) live in Wales, principally in Cardiff and Newport. The largest non-white group in Scotland is Pakistani (21,200) followed by Chinese (10,476) and Indian (10,050). People from the 'Other' group form the largest non-white minority in Wales (8,000) followed by Indians (7,000), Pakistanis (6,000) and Chinese (5,000).

▶ Different ethnic minority groups tend to be concentrated in different regions. These largely reflect the areas where the first settlers from these groups found work on their arrival in Britain. The general movement of people and jobs away from big cities to smaller towns and rural areas between 1971 and 1991 did not much affect the non-white population, who have remained concentrated in large urban areas: for example they made up 20.2% of Greater London's population in 1991 compared to 7.9% in 1971. Conversely, in East Anglia the non-white population grew by only 1.4% over the same period while the population of the region as a whole grew by 26.1%. Table 4 gives the 29 local authority districts with the largest non-white populations in Britain. The London Borough of Brent, which has the largest proportion (45%), also has the largest Irish-born population in Britain.

SOUTH ASIANS

▶ Greater London is home to 54% of Britain's Bangladeshi population, and the West Midlands to another 12%. Pakistanis are concentrated in the West Midlands (21%) and in Yorkshire and Humberside (20%), while Indians have settled mainly in the south east (53%) and the Midlands (30%).

BLACK GROUPS

▶ 58% of Black Caribbeans, 79% of Black Africans, and 44% of Other Black people live in Greater London. 16% of black Caribbeans live in the West Midlands.

CHINESE

▶ Chinese people are more dispersed than other non-white groups, with 36.1% in Greater London, 53% in the south east and 10% in the north west of England.

INTERNAL MIGRANTS

▶ 211,000 people born in Northern Ireland and living elsewhere in the UK are settled in England (86%), 26,000 in Scotland and 7,000 in Wales. One in five people born in Wales lives elsewhere in the UK, including 545,000 in England and 15,000 in Scotland. The dispersal rate for Scots-born people is lower (15%), including 744,000 in England and 23,000 in Wales, but English-born people are least likely (2%) to live in other parts of the UK, with 354,000 in Scotland and 540,000 in Wales.

AGE AND SEX

▶ Nearly a third of Britain's non-white population are under 15 years of age, and only 3% are pensioners compared with 17% of the white population (see Figure 2). Caribbeans (6%), Indians (4%) and Chinese (3%) have the largest proportions of over-65 year-olds.

▶ Although the ratio of men to women is roughly equal in the non-white

Table 4. Districts with the largest non-white proportions, 1991

District	All non-white (%)	% of GB pop	Largest non-white group	% of district pop
Brent	44.8	3.61	Indian	17.2
Newham	42.3	2.98	Indian	13.0
Tower Hamlets	35.6	57.3	Bangladeshi	22.9
Hackney	33.6	2.02	Black Carib	11.2
Ealing	32.3	2.95	Indian	16.1
Lambeth	30.3	2.46	Black Carib	12.6
Haringey	29.0	1.95	Black Carib	9.3
Leicester	28.5	2.55	Indian	22.3
Slough	27.7	0.93	Indian	12.5
Harrow	26.2	1.74	Indian	16.1
Waltham Forest	25.6	1.80	Black Carib	6.8
Southwark	24.4	1.77	Black Carib	8.3
Hounslow	24.4	1.66	Indian	14.3
Lewisham	22.0	1.68	Black Carib	10.1
Birmingham	21.5	6.86	Pakistani	6.9
Westminster, City of	21.5	6.86	Other-Other	4.3
Redbridge	21.4	1.63	Indian	10.2
Wandsworth	20.0	1.68	Black Carib	6.1
Luton	19.8	1.13	Pakistani	6.2
Islington	18.9	1.03	Black Carib	5.1
Wolverhampton	18.6	1.49	Indian	11.4
Barnet	18.4	1.79	Indian	7.3
Camden	17.8	1.01	Bangladeshi	3.5
Croydon	17.6	1.83	Black Carib	4.9
Hammersmith & Fulham	17.5	0.86	Black Carib	5.9
Merton	16.3	0.91	Indian	3.4
Bradford	15.6	2.37	Pakistani	9.9
Kensington & Chelsea	15.6	0.72	Other-Other	3.6
Blackburn	15.4	0.70	Indian	7.7

Source: Owers, D. 1992-1995

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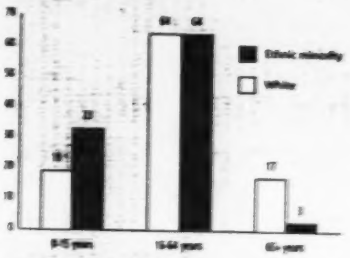
Figure 2. Age bands



Source: Modood et al, 1997

Table 5. Councillors in England and Wales, by ethnic group and sex, 1997

	MALE		FEMALE	
	No.	% of group	No.	% of group
White	15,020	72	5,740	28
Black Caribbean	66	68	31	32
Black African	13	76	4	24
Black Other	16	76	5	24
Indian	149	94	10	6
Pakistani	116	98	2	2
Bangladeshi	30	94	2	6
Chinese	1	0	0	0
Mixed	54	67	27	33
Any other origin	98	72	39	28
Base	15,563		5,861	

Source: LGMB 1998

population as a whole, there are substantial variations between groups. Women outnumber men among whites, Caribbeans, Chinese and Other ethnic groups, while men outnumber women among South Asians, particularly Bangladeshis and Pakistanis.

▶ Among people born outside the UK, there are marked differences in the gender balance between groups. Among those born in western Europe, women significantly outnumber men, while the reverse is true for those born in eastern Europe and the former USSR, the Near and Middle East and north Africa. The imbalance is greatest among the 13,000 people from the Philippines in London, 71% of whom are women.

FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

▶ The fourth PSI survey shows that the largest households are to be found among Bangladeshis and Pakistanis (5.7 people), followed by Indians and African Asians (3.9 each), Chinese (3.3), Caribbeans (3.2) and white people (2.4).

▶ Caribbean adults are more likely than adults from other non-white groups to live on their own, with or without children: 31%, compared with 16% for Chinese, 7% for Indians and 6% for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Among white adults overall, 16% live on their own, but nearly a third of households headed by Irish-born people at the 1991 census consisted of one person.

▶ At 45%, the largest proportion of one-parent families is found among Caribbeans, compared with 21% among whites and 8% among South Asians.

▶ The PSI survey found that 13% of white people in their 60s and 70s share a household with a son or daughter compared with 31% of Caribbean, 72% of Chinese, and 70% of African Asian elderly people.

▶ Only 1% of all marriages are between partners of different ethnic origins. Among non-white minorities, Caribbeans (20%) and Chinese (17%) are most likely to be with a white partner. Among British-born Caribbeans, however, 50% of men and 30% of women had white partners. The rate among British-born Indian men is 19%, compared with 4% for the group as a whole. Around 44% of Jewish men under 40 who are married or in a steady relationship have a non-Jewish partner.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

▶ In December 1998, nine (1.4%) of the 652 MPs in the House of Commons were from non-white ethnic minority groups. All were Labour MPs.

▶ On 1 May 1997, 662 (3%) of the 21,498 councillors in England and Wales were from ethnic minority groups. At 11.4%, London had the largest proportion of ethnic minority councillors, followed by 6.9% in the Midlands, 0.7% in the North, and 0.4% in Wales.

▶ With 309 councillors, South Asians formed the largest ethnic minority group, followed by 135 councillors from the black groups. Only one (male) councillor was from the Chinese group.

▶ 32% of Caribbean councillors were women compared with 28% of white councillors and only 5% of South Asian councillors (see Table 5).

▶ 83% of ethnic minority councillors represented Labour, 8% the Liberal Democrats and 6% the Conservative Party, compared with 46%, 23% and 21%, respectively, of white councillors.

SOURCES

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